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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATTORNEY GENERAL DARRELL MCGRAW ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT WITH MPIS, INC, A KEYSER, WEST VIRGINIA PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, FOR ITS INTERNET SALE OF PERSONAL CELL PHONE DATA

Attorney General Darrell McGraw announced today that his office has reached a settlement with MPIS, Inc. d/b/a Magnum P.I. Services and its owner/operator Jody Leatherman. MPIS, Inc. is a business located in Keyser, West Virginia, which sold information related to consumers' personal cell phones.

The agreement requires MPIS to pay a \$2,000 fine and to cease the sale of otherwise private cell phone records. The settlement further requires MPIS to update its state private investigator's license, which expired in 2003.

Along with several other Internet web sites, MPIS became the subject of House Commerce Committee and Federal Communications Commission investigations regarding the sale of personal cell phone data over the Internet. MPIS Inc. maintains or maintained several web sites on the Internet, including: www.publicpeoplefinder.com, www.nationwidesearch.com, www.locatepeople.com, www.personsearch.us, www.telephonesearches.com, www.locatepeople.net, www.easytolocate.com, www.lostpeople.com, and www.peoplesearchers.com.

On those websites, MPIS offered to sell a log documenting one individual's cell phone calls, including times, dates, and durations of calls, to a third party for \$189.99. MPIS sold this information without the knowledge of the individual whose information was sought. The records were not obtained directly by MPIS. Instead, MPIS indirectly purchased the information from Steven Schwartz of 1st Source Information Specialists, Inc.

1st Source Information Specialists, Inc. made misrepresentations to telecommunications carriers to obtain private information by falsely representing itself as a consumer or falsely representing itself as an agent of the telecommunications carrier. This process is known as "pretexting."

MPIS then paid 1st Source Information Specialists, Inc. for the improperly obtained information, and in fact, MPIS was still purchasing items from 1st Source Specialists, Inc. after it had been sued by the Illinois Attorney General. 1st Source has also been sued by Attorneys General in other states such as Texas and Missouri.

MPIS also offered a second product, the "Reverse Telephone Search," in which it would provide the name and address associated with any phone number (including cell phone numbers) to a third party for \$49.99. One of the unsuspecting parties who was a subject of a "Reverse Telephone Search" was a Sheriff's Department in Arizona. Someone gave MPIS a cell phone number and \$49.99, and they got back the Department's name and address.

Attorney General McGraw stated, "The sale of this personal and sensitive data is a serious invasion of privacy. In the case of domestic violence victims, stalking victims and undercover law enforcement, it is downright dangerous. A perfect example of this peril can be seen by MPIS's disclosure of the Arizona Sheriff Department's name and address in this case. It is easy to imagine how this might jeopardize the interests of law enforcement. I want to make sure that consumers and law enforcement officials are protected from this unauthorized release of information. We're doing our part in West Virginia to ensure that the

Internet sale of this data is halted.”

This Assurance is the second the Attorney General has had with MPIS, Inc. in recent years. The previous Assurance related to MPIS, Inc.’s failure to provide legitimate services paid for by consumers.

If you want to file a consumer complaint, please call Attorney General McGraw’s Consumer Hotline at 1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986 or by downloading a complaint form from this site.

To download and print a complaint form, please click on the **General Consumer Complaint Form** link at the top of this page.

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